

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 3, 2010

Washington D.C. – The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) condemned the deadly terrorist attacks on Wednesday and Friday on Shi'a and Ahmadis in Pakistan.

"USCIRF condemns these horrific attacks and extends our condolences to the victims and their families," said USCIRF chair Leonard Leo. "These tragedies show yet again that the Pakistani government must do more to protect its citizens, particularly members of religious minorities, from sectarian and religiously-motivated violence, and bring perpetrators to justice."

On Wednesday evening, a timed bomb and two suicide bombers attacked a Shi'a religious procession in Lahore, killing at least 40 people and wounding as many as 200 others. The procession was marking the anniversary of the death of Imam Ali, the first Shi'a imam, and was said to involve some 35,000 marchers. Pakistan's largest Taliban umbrella group, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the attack, saying that it was retaliation for the killing of a Sunni leader last year.

On Friday, Pakistani police confirmed 43 deaths after a blast at a Shi'a procession in Quetta. Another 78 were wounded in the blast. Also on Friday, a suicide attack on a mosque belonging to the minority Ahmadi community killed at least one person and wounded several others in the northwest Pakistani town of Mardan.

"We commend the United States government's announcement this week naming the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan as a foreign terrorist organization, and note Prime Minister Gilani's direct condemnation of Wednesday's terrorist act. We also urge the Pakistani government to do everything in its power to promptly bring those behind these bombings to justice and to ensure no further violence in the wake of these attacks," said Mr. Leo. "But more than this is required: the Pakistani government also must urgently address the problem of the country's religiously discriminatory legislation, which fosters an atmosphere of intolerance and emboldens extremists."

The USCIRF 2010 Annual Report recommends, among other policies, that the U.S. government urge the government of Pakistan to repeal its discriminatory blasphemy and anti-Ahmadi laws, to set national textbook and curricula standards that actively promote tolerance towards all religions and move quickly to implement those standards, and to provide oversight of madrassas in order to ensure the absence of intolerance and incitement to violence in education.

USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives. USCIRF's principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress.

To interview a USCIRF Commissioner, contact Tom Carter, Communications Director at [tcarter@uscirf.gov](mailto:tcarter@uscirf.gov) or (202) 523-3257